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ТИРАН И СВЯТОЙ: ЖЕСТОКОСТЬ, АМБИВАЛЕНТНОСТЬ, ЮМОР В РАННИХ РАССКАЗАХ О ДРАКУЛЕ

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Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются литературно-художественные традиции, связанные с формированием образа Влада III (Дракулы), князя Валахии, которые начали распространяться о нем во второй половине XV в. Его пресловутая безжалостность и беспощадность уже при жизни закрепили за ним славу одного из самых жестоких исторических персонажей. В данном исследовании рассматривается, как, подражая и переписывая современные литературные сюжеты, авторы создавали образ воеводы как жестокого тирана и гонителя христиан. Сравнивая немецкую и русскую версии повестей о Дракуле, мы попытались доказать, что русский автор включил в сказание о Дракуле и политическую идеологию своей эпохи. Анализ опирается на три источника: Санкт-Галленскую рукопись (1461), стихотворную хронику Михаэля Бехайма (1416?–1479?) и «Сказание о Дракуле воеводе» (1486).

Ключевые слова: Михаэль Бехайм, немецкие и русские сказания о Дракуле, литературный топос, литературная пропаганда, тело в Средние века.

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THE TYRANT AND THE SAINT: CRUELTY, AMBIVALENCE, HUMOUR IN THE EARLIEST DRACULA TALES

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Abstract: The article explores the literary and artistic traditions around Vlad III (alias Dracula), Prince of Wallachia, which started circulating about him in the second half of the fifteenth century. His proverbial ruthlessness and cruelty gained him a name among the most vicious historical figures already during his lifetime. This study examines how, by imitating and rewriting contemporary literary topoi, the authors created the image of the voivode as the cruel tyrant and the persecutor of Christians. By comparing the German and Russian versions of the Dracula tales, we tried to prove that the Russian author also incorporated the political ideology of his era in the Russian Dracula stories. The analysis relies on three sources: the Sankt-Gallen manuscript (1461), the verse chronicle of Michael Beheim (1416?–1479?), and *Skazanie o Drakule voivode* (1486).

Keywords: Michael Beheim, German and Russian Dracula Tales, literary topos, literary propaganda, body in Middle Age.

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Introduction

For a century and a half between the 1460s and the middle of the 16th century, Vlad Țepeș (alias Dracula, 1431?–1476), the voivode of a small south-eastern European country, Wallachia, was the star of contemporary European mass media. By 1560, seven manuscript copies and thirteen printed leaflets were published with stories about the deeds of the voivode. In addition, between 1460 and 1470, no less than five crypto-portraits were made of him, which were featured in some of the printed works as well [30]. The exceptional press history was a result of the actions of Matthias, King of Hungary (1443–1490), who in the autumn of 1462 arrested the voivode and held him in captivity (in house arrest) in Buda and Visegrád for more than ten years. The first item in Vlad/Dracula's literary career is the epigram (*De captivitate Dragule waiwode Transalpini*) by the Hungarian humanist poet Janus Pannonius (1434–1472), written in December 1462. The poem is a typical representative of occasional poetry: Janus rejoices that the tyrant is now wearing a chain, and everyone is looking forward to seeing Matthias return to Buda in the winter [50, p. 221–222]. After that, the centres of the Dracula propaganda were Vienna, and later the German market towns (Nuremberg, Lübeck, Bamberg, Leipzig).

Thomas Ebendorfer (1388–1464), professor of theology at the University of Vienna, inserted short narratives about Dracula into his work on the history of the Roman Empire (*Chronica regum Romanorum*), in the section containing the records of major and minor events in 1460–1462. He must have collected these while writing the chronicle in 1463 (he died on 12 January 1464)[1]. The relevant

1 Modern edition: [48].

passages in Enea Silvio Piccolomini's (Pope Pius II's, 1405–1464) *Commentarii rerum memorabilium, que temporibus suis contingerunt* should be considered an equally early version of the stories. Piccolomini died on August 14, 1464. He was working on *Comentarii* until his death, but it was only printed in 1584[2]. The most elaborate version of the Dracula stories (*Von ainem Wurtich der hiess Trakle Waida von der Walachei*) was produced by Michael Beheim, also written in the summer-autumn of 1463. At that time, Beheim was in the service of Emperor Frederick III (1415–1493) and resided in Wiener Neustadt [29; 30].

All the four mentioned works were born after the arrest of voivode Vlad. However, certain records suggest that the first versions of the Dracula stories were composed even before the voivode was detained. Ebendorfer's, Piccolomini's, and Beheim's respective texts conclude with Matthias taking the voivode captive. Piccolomini also reveals that Matthias arrested Vlad because he wanted to betray the Hungarian king to the Turks[3]. A German version of the Dracula stories (*Uan eyneme bösen tyrannen ghenomet Dracole w[a]yda)*, which does not include the episode of the arrest of the voivode, has survived in the Abbey of Sankt-Gallen. The codex containing this version of the Dracula stories is a collection of texts dated between 1450 and 1550. The volume was compiled in 1573 by a monk named Mauritius[4]. It is reasonable to assume that the Sankt-Gallen version was written

2 Modern edition: [52].

3 In his *Comentarii,* Piccolomini even published the letter written by Dracula to Mehmed II, dated 7 November 1462. In the letter, the voivode made an offer to Mehmed II to play Matthias and the entire territory of Hungary into his hands. However, the letter was intercepted by the men of Matthias, and the Hungarian king sent it to the Pope. However, the authenticity of the letter is doubtful.

"To the emperor of all emperors and lord of all lords under the sun, the great Amurato, the great Sultan Maumeth, blessed in all things, [I] Johann voievod, lord of Wallachia, [offer my] humble service. I, the servant of Your Majesty, inform you that I am setting out this day with an army for my own land and I trust in God that I shall reach it unless I am prevented by your command. Therefore I humbly beseech Your Majesty not to have regard to my error and my great sin, since in ignorance I sinned against you and did evil in your land. But may your clemency have pity on me and grant that I may send envoys to you. I know all the regions of Transylvania and all Hungary and am familiar with the character of the various regions and conditions there. If it so pleases Your Majesty, I can in atonement for my sin hand over to you all Transylvania, the possession of which will enable you to bring all Hungary under your power. My envoys will tell you more. So long as I live I will serve you with unshaken loyalty. May God grant many years to your great empire. Written at Ruetel [Cisnădie, Heltau? in Romania], November 7, 1462" [24, p. 739g. For the Latin original, see [52, p. 2162–2164].

4 The provenance of the manuscript of Sankt Gallen: Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 806, fol. 283–288. The codex is also available online: https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0806 (Accessed 24 September 2020). The published version of the manuscript is avaiable in: [8, S. 90–96].

before November 1462 (when Matthias arrested Dracula), since it is unlikely that such an important event as Dracula's arrest would not have been mentioned by the author/copyist, had he known about it. Therefore, the Sankt Gallen copy retained the oldest version of the Dracula stories currently known.

The four works mentioned here remained in manuscript, however, the texts belonging to the second wave of the Dracula propaganda have made it to print. The first brochure appeared in Marx Ayrer's Nuremberg printing house on 14 October 1488 (that is, long after the death of the voivode in 1476). The horror stories proved a profitable business: in sixty years (until 1560), thirteen editions were produced in various German market towns (Nuremberg, Lübeck, Leipzig, Augsburg, Strassbourg, Bamberg). The last brochure came out sometime between 1559 and 1568 in Augsburg, in Mattheus Francken's press [25, S. 81–88; 8, S. 145–180].

The present study explores how, by imitating and rewriting contemporary literary topoi, the authors created the image of the voivode as the cruel tyrant, and the persecutor of Christians. The analysis relies on two sources: the Sankt-Gallen manuscript (because it is the oldest), and the verse chronicle of Michael Beheim, because it offers the most coherent and elaborate version of the stories.

Saints, Martyrs, Cannibals

In one of the stories, Dracula meets three monks at the gates of the monastery "Gorioni": John, Michael and James just return from the collection of alms. Dracula asks Michael whether he, the cruel voivode who had already sent many martyrs and saints to heaven with his impalements and murders, would be saved after his death. According to Michael's positive answer, the voivode can expect grace:

> Brother Michael said: "Sire,
> you may well find mercy
> since God has granted grace to many a man
> appearing to be far from favor" [46, p. 337].

However, in the shadow of death, the other monk, John, decides to tell Dracula the truth, and he even challenges the voivode:

> The monk spoke: “You worthless devil,
> you pitiless murderer!
> You raging, frightful despot!
> You spiller-of-blood and tyrant!
> How you torture poor souls!
> What harm have pregnant women done
> to deserve impalement?
> What did the little children ever do to you
> that you would take away their lives —
> some being three days old;
> some not yet three hours old?
> These you command to be impaled,
> though no one has done you ill.
> And you pour forth the blood
> of the innocents.
> What is the crime
> of those who have lost their lives,
> whose pure and tender blood
> you spill prodigiously without cause?
> Your murderous enmity amazes me.
> What is it that you are avenging? This
> you should make clear to me” [46, p. 338].

Dracula answers in the following manner:

> Dracula said: “This I shall
> tell you straight away.
> He who wishes to clear the ground for plowing
> should start things off properly.
> This means not only cutting down
> thorns and weeds that have grown up,
> but paying heed to their roots.
> For, if the roots are left behind,
> in a year one will again find
> rude, malevolent thorns.

In these little children here,
I would have created the gravest enemies,
had I let them grow to adulthood.
No, I wish to weed them out now,
before they sprout roots.
Surely they would resolve
to avenge their fathers” [46, p. 338–339].

Unsurprisingly, John cannot escape his fate: Dracula has him impaled on a stake, but upside down, not like his other victims:

Dracula grabbed the monk without delay
and began to impale him himself —
but not like the others.
The others got the pole
from the rear end, but this time
he changed the place of impalement.
One pole (or pike)
Dracula himself hammered into his brain.
[The monk’s] head was at the bottom, and his feet
were facing upwards [46, p. 339][5].

The scene is full of gnostic and biblical allusions. The justification for infanticide refers to Herod’s actions: just as the king of the Jews feared the infant Jesus, so is Dracula afraid that the little ones might later take revenge on him, and therefore, like Herod, he exterminates them. In addition, Dracula’s argument to the monks is pure Gnosticism: just as redemption could not take place without Judas and Pilate — that is, good (salvation through Christ’s death) can only happen through evil (Judas’s betrayal, Pilate’s hesitant cowardice) — so does Dracula do good through evil (impalement, other cruel murders), because those who were innocently killed were sent to heaven as martyr-saints. Therefore, as one of the greatest creator of saints, he in fact deserves no punishment but reward from God, because the souls of those killed by him did not go to hell but to heaven [8, S. 74–76].

5 The Sankt-Gallen manuscript does not contain this story, so it is reasonable to think of it as Beheim’s own invention.

It is certainly more than a coincidence that in Beheim's story Dracula impaled the truthful monk upside down. In all likelihood, here Beheim made a subtle reference to the legend of St. Peter, as it is found in the *Legenda aurea*[6]. According to legend, when Emperor Nero sentenced Peter to death, the apostle, upon reaching the cross, said:

> "Because my Lord came down from heaven to earth, his cross was raised straight up; but he deigns to call me from earth to heaven, and my cross should have my head toward the earth and should point my feet toward heaven. Therefore, since I am not worthy to be on the cross the way my Lord was, turn my cross and crucify me head down!" So they turned the cross and nailed him to it with his feet upwards and his hands downwards [51, p. 345].

Therefore, the monk impaled upside down becomes Saint Peter, while Dracula turns into an imitation of Nero in the text of Beheim, who expressis verbis compared Dracula to Herod and other notorious persecutors of Christians:

> This despot and tyrant brought forth
> all the torments that one might imagine.
> Of all the tyrants,
> none was his equal as a cause of harm:
> Herod, Diocletian,
> Nero — not anyone you might name! [46, p. 325]

Beheim also relied on the legend of Saint Peter in the story about the voivode who, after realising that one of his concubines had become pregnant, cut her belly open to see his glorious successor:

> Dracula had a concubine who
> claimed that she
> was with child.

6 *Legenda aurea* (Golden Legend) was compiled by the Dominican Italian monk Jacobus de Voragine (cca. 1230 – 1298) between 1263 and 1267. It became an extremely popular reading in medieval Europe. About a thousand medieval manuscript copies have survived, and more than 150 Latin and vernacular editions were published before 1500 [38].

Dracula had her examined
within a short time by another woman.
This one confirmed the story
that the concubine had told.
Dracula then took his mistress
and had her ripped open, fully,
from the pudenda upwards,
saying that he wished to observe his fruit,
as well as his noble offspring's
positioning — where it lay in the mother [46, p. 331; 8, S. 206].

The story in the legend of St. Peter offers more gory details:

> The same apocryphal history tells us that Nero, obsessed by an evil madness, ordered his mother killed and cut open so that he could see how it had been for him in her womb. The physicians, calling him to task over his mother's death, said: "Our laws prohibit it, and divine law forbids a son to kill his mother, who gave birth to him with such pain and nurtured him with so much toil and trouble." Nero said to them: "Make me pregnant with a child and then make me give birth, so that I may know how much pain it cost my mother." <...> So the doctors made up a potion in which they put a frog and gave it to the emperor to drink. Then they used their skills to make the frog grow in his belly, and his belly, rebelling against this unnatural invasion, swelled up so that Nero thought he was carrying a child [51, p. 347][7].

Dracula was once again identified with Nero by Beheim, but he decided to save his listeners/readers from the repugnant frog story. The story of the two monks bears similarities not only to the legend of St. Peter but to another medieval anecdote as well (*How the Emperor Frederick put a question to two wise men, and how he rewarded them*):

> The Emperor Frederick had two exceedingly wise men about him; one was called Bolgaro, the other Martino. One day the Emperor was in the company of these two wise men, one of them on his right hand, and the other on his left. And

7 See also: [22, S. 108–110].

> the Emperor put a question to them and said: can I give to any one of my subjects and take away from another, according to my will and without other cause? Since I am their lord, and the law says that what pleases the lord shall be law to his subjects. Say then whether I may do this, since such is my pleasure. One of the two wise men replied: Sire, whatever is your pleasure, that you may do to your subjects without causing wrong. The other sage answered and said: to me it seems not, since the law is utterly just, and its conditions must be observed and followed with an extreme nicety. When you take away, it should be known from whom and also to whom you give. Since both of the wise men spoke the truth, he offered gifts to both. To the one he gave a scarlet hat and a white palfrey; and to the other he gave the right to make a law to please his fancy. Whence there arose a great discussion among the learned as to which of the two he had given the richer present. It was held that to him who had said he could give and take away as it pleased him he had given clothing and a palfrey as to a minstrel because he had flattered him. To him who followed justice, he gave the right to make a law [49, p. 84–85].

This story comes from the medieval Italian collection of short stories *Il novellino* (XXIV. novella). The first version of the collection known as *Cento novelle antiche o Libro di novelle e di bel parlar gentile* originates from the late thirteenth century. The first printed edition (with 50 short stories) was published by Masuccio Salernitano (1410–1476) in 1476. In medieval and Renaissance Italy, the short stories of the collection were widely known, even Boccaccio relied extensively on them while writing *Decameron*. The story of Emperor Frederick and the two wise men appears even in several 13th–15th century codices[8]. Thus, Beheim recounted a several-centuries-old topos well-known among contemporary humanists.

This narrative is also included in the Russian version of the Dracula stories, where it faced minor adjustments. Feodor Kuritsyn, who stayed in Buda between 1482 and 1484 as the envoy of Ivan III of Russia (1462–1505), played a crucial role in the emergence of Russian Dracula stories [46; 16; 3, p. 171–175]. During his stay there he acquired a probably Serbian compilation of the Dracula tales[9], which was then copied by Friar Jefrosim in 1486 and 1490 in an Old Rus-

8 For a detailed list, see [19].

9 András Zoltán brought linguistic arguments to emphasise that the Russian version is the translation and adaptation of an Old Serbian rendering of the story [1; 3, p. 175–180; 43]. On the genesis of Russian Dracula stories, see also: [18].

sian translation. In all likelihood, Jefrosim, or another author before him, did not merely copy the text, but also reworked it according to contemporary ideologies promoted by the Russian Grand Prince [5; 28, p. 70; 39, p. 47]. For example, the story of the two monks in the Russian version is as follows:

> There came one day, from the country of Hungary, two Catholic monks to collect alms. [Dracula] ordered them to be hosted separately. He invited one of them to his home and showed him, outside his court, a great many people impaled or broken on the wheel, and asked him: "Have I acted well? How do you judge those who are [impaled] on these stakes?" The other responded: "No, Lord, you have acted badly, because you punish without mercy. It becomes a master to show mercy, and those you have impaled are martyrs." Dracula then called for the second monk and asked him the same question. The monk replied: "You have been placed here by God as a sovereign to punish those who have done evil and to reward those who have done good. And those who have done evil have received what they deserve." Dracula then summoned back the second monk and said to him: "Why have you left your monastery and your cell and come to the courts of great sovereigns, being so ignorant? You come to tell me that these people are martyrs; I likewise wish to make you a martyr, so you will be a martyr at their sides." Then he ordered the monk impaled upwards from the rectum. And he also ordered that the second be given fifty golden ducats and said to him: "You are a wise man." And he ordered that he be returned with honor to Hungary, in a carriage[10] [55, p. 359–360].

The key lesson of the Russian story is not that those in power will punish inconvenient truthfulness while rewarding sycophantic lies. Instead, Dracula criticises the monk who confronts him with his own cruelty and mercilessness for having little understanding of secular matters and tells him that he should have stayed in his convent. Similarly, the second monk's answer focuses less on sycophancy, and more on the core tenet of late-fifteenth century Russian ideologies of power according to which the ruler is an elect of God, and his decisions follow divine inspiration. Therefore, his cruelty is not an end in itself, but follows God's will: "You have been placed here by God as a sovereign [государь] to pun-

10 The English translation of the Russian Dracula stories are cited here from version included in Cazacu's monograph [15]. The most complete edition of the original, based on 22 manuscript copies: [44]. The quoted passage in the original Russian in the edition by Lur'e: [44, p. 119].

ish those who have done evil and to reward those who have done good. And those who have done evil have received what they deserve” [55, p. 360].

The story aptly reveals the two main trends in the attitude of the Russian church to secular power around the turn of the 15th–16th century. The militant wing of the church was represented by the monk Iosif Volotskii (1439–1501) known also as Joseph of Volokolamsk, and his followers. In their view, the church does not simply have the right to get involved in politics, but it is their downright duty, and as such, the church is the single most important advisor and aid of the Grand Prince. In the area of foreign policy, they were the creators of the Moscow = third Rome concept: since the fall of Byzantium wrought havoc in the Greek faith, Moscow must assume the role of the intellectual (and political) leader of Christendom. Representatives of the other trend, led by Nil Sorsky (Nilus of Sora, Nil Sorski) promoted ascetism, meditation, seclusion, the evangelical poverty of religious communities and a total separation of church and politics [21, p. 83–88; 14, p. 7–8; 40, p. 197–201]. It cannot be escaped that in the Dracula episode the first monk propagates the views of the group led by Sorsky, while the other represents the views of the followers of Volotskii. Neither is it doubtful that the Russian compiler preferred the latter views. Although the first monk briefly mentions mercy as the virtue of the ruler, however, the story reveals a defeat of this view. In fact, the arguments based on Paul’s letter to the Romans (13: 1–7) lend legitimacy to the ruler’s cruelty. Since the ruler is an elect of God, he is infallible. Therefore, those punished by him must have been evildoers, and their punishment was justified. In a concealed way this also suggests that the ruler is just, and punishes no innocent people, only sinners.

The Russian version omits the references to the *Legenda aurea*, as well as biblical and gnostic references. Although *Legenda aurea* was not yet known for Russia readers in the late fifteenth century, there were probably more complex reasons for the omission. The Russian author did not only compile the religious elements into his text, but also incorporated the political ideology of his era in the Dracula stories.

The following anecdote about Dracula also goes back to *Il novellino*:

> The ill, blind, disabled, lame,
> beggars, poor people, and
> anyone that he [Dracula] could lay hold of:

all these he invited to his castle.
When the banquet was concluded,
he had all present
burned to death in a derelict barn.
He said: "These people have no value."
There were 600 or more —
but no survivors! [46, p. 341][11]

Novellino narrates this story in connection with Ezzelino (or Azzollino) da Romano. Ezzelino was a real person who lived between 1194 and 1259 in Vicenza, Verona, and Padua. He belonged to the imperial Ghibellins, and accordingly supported the aforementioned Frederick II, so after his death, he was excommunicated by Pope Innocent IV. In the *Divine Comedy* the guelf-sympathizer Dante (the guelfs were more supportive of the Pope than the Emperor) placed Ezzelino in the bloodstream of hell, but he provided no details about the sins he was punished for (Hell, Chant XII, 109–110). The story in the *Novellino* is as follows:

How Messer Azzolino Romano arranged a great charity

Messer Azzolino Romano once announced a great charity in his territory, and invited the people there and elsewhere to attend. And so all the poor men and women were summoned to his meadows on a certain day, that each should be given a new habit and plenty to eat. The news spread abroad. Folk came from all parts. When the day of the assembly arrived, the seneschals were ready with the clothes and the food, and each person was made to undress and cast off his old shoes, when new clothes were given and food handed out. The poor people wanted their old clothes back, but it was of no avail, for they were all piled up in a heap and fire was laid thereto. Then so much gold and silver were given as compensated them, and they were told to go home in the name of God [49, p. 83, LXXXIV. novella].

The counterfeit beggar is a popular topos in medieval European literature [30, p. 325]. In the Dracula stories, however, the focus is not on the cheating of beggars (as in *Novellino*), but on the social policy of the voivode: instead of

11 Cf.: [8, S. 212–213].

the clothes of the beggars, he burns the beggars themselves, because they were not profitable from a social aspect [23; 34]. However, Ezzelino is not a cruel and despotic tyrant, but a master (*messere*) who ingeniously unveils the deceit of the beggars [35].

In the Russian version is used this story to promote the political ideology that he supported. The Russian anecdote ends with the dialogue between Dracula and the beggars, and the explanation that Dracula gave to the boyars:

> Dracula now came in person to visit them and said: “What else do you need?” And they said in unison: “Lord, only God and Your Highness know [the answer], and God will make you understand [it].” He then said: “Do you wish me to make it so that you have no more cares, and lack nothing in this world?” And they all, anticipating some great [act of] generosity, said: “We wish it, Lord.” At this he ordered the house to be locked and set on fire and they all perished, burned [to death]. As this was happening he said to his boyars: “Know that I have done this so that, first of all, they will no longer be a burden for others, and that there shall be no more poor in my country, and all will be rich. Second, I have delivered them [from this life] so they will no longer suffer poverty in this world, or any other sort of malady” [55, p. 359; 44, p. 119].

The passage advocates the ideology that the ruler acts upon the inspiration of God, and thus the motivation behind the ruler’s actions is beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. For fifteenth-century Russian religious and secular thinkers, the Ruler was an elect of God, with a unique, mystical connection between them. The ruler and God are two powerful, interconnected forces of nearly equal rank. Sigismund von Herberstein (1486–1566), envoy of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, paid two visits (in 1517 and 1526) to the court of Vasilii III (1505–1535) after the birth of the Russian Dracula stories. His account of the power relations of the Grand Prince of Moscow shows many parallels with certain elements of the discourse of ideology and power in the Russian Dracula tales.

> In the sway which he holds over his people, he surpasses all monarchs of the whole world. <...> He uses his authority as much over ecclesiastics or laymen, and holds unlimited control over the lives and property of all his subjects; not one of his counsellors has sufficient authority to dare to oppose him, or even differ from

> him, on any subject. They openly confess that the will of the prince is the will of God, and whatever the prince does he does it by the will of God [53, p. 30, 32; 54, p. 15–16].

It must be noted that the Russian text refers to Dracula not only as 'voivode' (воевода), but in many instances the author calls him 'master' (государь). The word 'государь/господаръ' (gosudar/gospodar) originally meant master, or owner, referring to the relationship between the master and the servant; unfree people (holops, холоп) used this word to address their lord. Ivan III (1462–1505) even demanded that everyone (including the lords) should refer to themselves as 'holop' when addressing the Grand Prince. In the 14th century the term is exlusively used as the title of the lords of Halych (Casimir III the Great, Vladislaus II of Opole). In the fifteenth century it begins to appear in the title of the Grand Prince of Moscow, too [3, p. 46–72; 2; 42]. The bearer of the title of 'gospodar' possessed limitless power over his subjects. In the Russian versions of the Dracula stories, the voivode behaves according to the ideals of a good gospodar. In the Western European renderings of the Dracula stories, the voivode appears as a flat character, and his senseless cruelty serves no higher purpose. His acts of cruelty are not based on direct reasons, neither do they have a specific purpose. The voivode of the Russian versions is more ambivalent. The voivode is cruel but just at the same time. His cruelty is not an end in itself, but it is based on the ideological purpose of raising fear of the ruler in the subjects. The expectation of a ruler who radiates fear was wide-spread in Russian sources already in the fifteenth century, where it was referred to with the word 'groznij' (грозный). Medieval Russian political culture was familiar with the idea that the ruler should be fearsome already before the rise of Moscow, although the word грозный only became an epithet of Ivan IV, or Ivan the Terrible (1533–1584). Raising fear, however, also serves a higher purpose, as it is a means to achieve justice. According to this concept, governance is just if the ruler radiates fear to eradicate and prevent vice. Part of a ruler's justness is equality before him, which means that punishments applied to everyone in equal measure, whether the person in question was a holop, muzhik, advisor, official or boyar.

> [Dracula] hated evil in his country so much that whoever committed a misdeed — whether it was theft, armed robbery, lying, or injustice — had no chance of remaining alive. No one — [no matter] whether he was a great boyar, priest, monk,

> commoner, or very wealthy man — could buy his life. And such fear he inspired [can be seen from the following]. He possessed a spring and a fountain by which would pass many travelers, from many lands. Many people came to drink at this spring and fountain, because its water was cool and tasted good. Dracula had placed near this fountain, [which was] situated in a deserted place, a great cup of marvelously worked gold. And whoever wished to drink might use this cup, and return it to where he had found it. And as long as it was there, no one dared to steal it [55, p. 359; 44, p. 118].

This is the image of the fearsome but at the same time just ruler, who will exempt no one from punishment, notwithstanding rank and social status.

Among the Western European authors discussing Dracula, only the writings of Antonio Bonfini (1427, 1434? – 1502) use a similar approach. Bonfini arrived in the Hungarian royal court of Buda in 1486. Here he became the reader of the queen, Beatrice d'Aragona (1457–1508). In 1488 he received a commission from King Matthias (1443–1490) to write an up-to-date history of Hungary *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*), which he had worked on until 1497. The work contains the following passage on Dracula:

> It is said that Dracula was a ruler of *unheard cruelty and fairness*. Some say that the envoys of the Turks, following their own national tradition, were reluctant to remove their Frygian caps, so he fixed the cap on their heads with three nails so as to reinforce the tradition by preventing the removal of the cap for good; he put numerous Turks on the Stake, and then held a banquet with his friends among the impaled people with good appetite; in another instance, he held a rich banquet for all the weakened, unhealthy beggars, only to have the fully fed people consumed by flames; moreover, he often skinned the soles of the Turkish prisoners, rubbed them with ground salt, and then allowed goats to lick the salty soles with their rough tongues to increase the pain; when he was once anxious as to whether he had the money, which he had entrusted to a Florentine merchant, he laid the person out in the middle of the road, and only let him go unhurt when he counted the money at night, and it was found that he had not deceived him; *he lived with such strictness that in this barbaric region, even in the middle of the forest, anyone could be safe, together with their belongings*[12] (my italics. — *L.N.*).

12 Translated into English for the purposes of the present paper. "*Inaudite crudelitatis et iustitie Draculam fuisse memorant.* Hunc aiunt Turcorum legatis in preveneratione pilea Phrygia ex patrie

At first glance, it seems that there is no difference between the Russian concept of political theory and Bonfini's "ruler of unheard cruelty and fairness." However, the final sentence in the passage clearly states that such cruelty is only warranted in barbaric regions, as a necessary evil, the only means to maintain safety and fairness. The Western European "consumer" of the Dracula stories could calm down: such meaningless, unpredictable, unreasonable, perverted acts of cruelty can only happen in the barbaric "East."

Gypsies

In addition to beggars, gypsies are also prominent characters of the Dracula stories, featured in two interesting anecdotes. Only one of the stories will be discussed here.

> He had a Gypsy
> seized who had committed a robbery.
> When it became known,
> there arrived others of his
> comrades, the Gypsies,
> and begged Dracula that he
> might release the prisoner to them.
> Dracula said: "That is impossible.
> He is to hang. This is his reward.
> Let no man counter my order!"
> They replied: "Lord, hanging
> is not our custom.
> If one steals something,
> that should not be regarded with contempt.
> We have a sealed missive

instituto deponere recusantibus confirmandi moris gratia tris capiti clavos affixise, ne amplius amoveri possent. Innumeros palis Turcos prefixisse et inter eos cum amicis laute discubuisse. Mendicos insuper omnis deperdite ignavie miserabilisque valitudinis et fortune lautissimo convivio excepisse, deinde cibo vinoque completos iniecto igno absumpsisse. Item Turcis sepe captivis cute pedes exuisse contusoque sale perfricuisse, mox lingentes salsas plantas capras adhibuisse, que lingue asperitate cruciatum augerent. Mercatorem Florentinum de asservandis pecuniis sollicite percunctantem in media deponere via iussisse et nil de numerata nocte pecunia mentientem incolumen dimisisse. *In barbara regione tanta severitate usum, ut in media quisque sylva cum rebus tutissimus esse posset*" [45, p. 243].

> from Holy Roman Emperors, an extensive one,
> to the effect that we are not to be hanged" [46, p. 328].

The "sealed missive" presented by the Gypsies to Dracula, according to which Gypsies have the right to steal, had a rich reception in fifteenth-century European historiography. The earliest mention of the document is found in the Bologna municipal yearbook (*Cronica di Bologna*), under the entry dated 18 July 1422:

> [A] duke of Egypt, Duke Andrew, arrived at Bologna, with women, children, and men from his own country. There might be a hundred. This duke having denied the Christian faith, the King of Hungary [the Emperor Sigismund] had taken possession of his lands and person. Then he told the King that he wished to return to Christianity, and he had been baptized with about four thousand men; those who refused baptism were put to death. After the King of Hungary had thus taken and rebaptized them, he commanded them to travel about the world for seven years, to go to Rome to see the pope, and then to return to their own country. When they arrived at Bologna, they had been journeying for five years, and more than half of them were dead. They had a mandate from the King of Hungary, the Emperor, permitting them during these seven years to thieve, wherever they might go, without being amenable to justice [47, p. 6111][13].

In 1424, Andrew, a priest from Regensburg (Andreas Ratisbonensis, †1442?, 1447?) already transcribed the text of the mandate and knew that it was issued in Szepes on 19 April 1422 by Sigismund of Luxemburg (1368–1437), King of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor. The text of the diploma was also published by Herman Cornerus in his *Chronica novella*, written around 1435. Not until the twentieth century was it recognised that the mandate had been a blatant forgery [33, p. 47–64]. This, of course, did not prevent 15^{th}-century humanists from widely spreading the tale about the Gypsies, that is how it must have reached Beheim as well. However, the gypsies were not added to the Dracula stories with the purpose of illustrating the contemporary situation in Wallachia, but to "entertain" a Western European readership. Gypsies appeared in Europe in the 14^{th}–15^{th} centu-

13 English translation: https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/roma/gft/gft005.htm (Accessed 07 May 2023).

ries. Initially on the Balkan Peninsula (Raguza, 1362; Bulgaria, 1378; Wallachia, 1385), then in Transylvania (around 1400) and Hungary (1416) [6, p. 13–17]. Nevertheless, the destination of the Gypsies was not Central, but Western Europe. They primarily targeted cities, and Wallachia and Hungary were only affected as transit routes. Residents of Western European cities experienced their encounters with the Gypsies as a real culture shock. The author of the already mentioned chronicle of Bologna recorded the following passage about the Gypsies, who stayed there for only fifteen days:

> During this time many people went to see them, on account of the duke's wife, who, it was said, could foretell what would happen to a person during his lifetime, as well as what was interesting in the present, how many children would be born, and other things. Concerning all which she told truly. And of those who wished to have their fortunes told, few went to consult without getting their purse stolen, and the women had pieces of their dress cut off. The women of the band wandered about the town, seven or eight together; they entered the houses of the inhabitants, and whilst they were telling idle tales, some of them laid hold of what was within their reach. In the same way they visited the shops under the pretext of buying something, but really to steal. So it was cried through the town that no one should go to see them under a penalty of fifty pounds and excommunication, for they were the most cunning thieves in all the world. In consequence of which several of the inhabitants of Bologna slipped during the night into a stable where some of their horses were shut up, and stole the best of them. The others, wishing to get back their horses, agreed to restore a great number of the stolen articles. But seeing that there was nothing more to gain there, they left Bologna and went off towards Rome. Observe that they were the ugliest brood ever seen in this country. They were lean and black, and they ate like swine. Their women went in smocks, and wore a pilgrim's cloak across the shoulder, rings in their ears, and a long veil on their head [47, p. 612].

The Dracula stories captured the Gypsy experience of the Western Europeans: the topoi associated with the Gypsies in the Western chronicles (apostasy, thieving, penance, seven years pilgrimage, Sigismund's mandate, etc.) are completely missing from the earliest authentic Transylvanian sources about Gypsies (precisely from the second half of the fifteenth century) [33, p. 5, 48]. There is one

further missing element in the Russian versions of the Dracula tales: the gypsies. No wonder, since in Russia, gypsies started to appear later than in other European countries, only around 1500. Even then their number was low, and a more numerous group only emerged around the eighteenth-nineteenth century. There were no gypsies among the slaves (holops) of fifteenth-sixteenth century Russia [6, p. 23–29]. Thus, Russian readers would have been indifferent towards gypsies, so the Russian translator/transcriber of the text omitted the stories featuring gypsy protagonists. It seems then that those who recorded the Dracula stories relied on Western European sources, and played on the gypsy representations as they appeared in the writings of the Western European authors.

Dracula in the role of Aegeas and Pilate

Two monks of Saint Bernard who
were wearing wooden clogs
came to Dracula.
Alms they
desired of him and made their request
of one accord.
Dracula said to them:
"How is it that you are so poverty-stricken?"
They answered: "My lord, Eternal Life
we hope to attain with our way of living."
Thereupon he asked of the two brothers:
"Don't you desire to get [to heaven] soon?"
They said: "Your worship, yes! We
wished that we were already there —
if this be the Lord God's will!"
He said: "I will help you quickly
get to heaven."
Promptly, he had them impaled,
saying: "I did it for honorable reasons.
My assistance can only profit them" [46, p. 335][14].

14 Cf.: [8, S. 210–211].

The story of the monks who want to go to heaven from the earthly world they held in contempt resembles the martyrdom of St. Andrew. According to the legend, when they began to torture him, Andrew would do everything in his power to keep his followers from hindering his martyrdom. Like the monks of the Dracula story, Andrew would like to get rid of the vain physical world as soon as possible to reach Christ, so he speaks to the cross in a near-masochistic manner:

> Hail, O cross sanctified by the body of Christ and adorned with his limbs as with precious stones! Before the Lord was lifted up on you, you were greatly feared on earth, but now you draw down love from heaven and are accepted as a blessing. I come to you assured and rejoicing, so that you may joyfully accept me, the disciple of him who hung upon you, for I have always loved you and yearned to embrace you. O good cross, honored and beautified by the limbs of the Lord, long desired, constantly loved, ceaselessly sought, and now prepared for my wishful heart! Take me away from the world of men and return me to my Master, that he, having redeemed me by means of you, may receive me from you [51, p. 17].

This parallel is confirmed by the appearance of Dracula on an altarpiece representing the martyrdom of St. Andrew. In 1970 Walter Peters discovered that the painting "*The Martyrdom of St Andrew*" (1470–1480) in the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere also included Dracula (Figure 1). The painting was originally part of a winged altarpiece, until it was transferred from Lilienfeld Abbey to Vienna in 1953 [7, p. 253, 383]. According to the legend of Saint Andrew, Aegeas had a long debate with Andrew about suffering, at the end of which he crucified Andrew. People asked Aegeas to release Andrew, but he fervently desired suffering. Aegeas became uncertain of his decision and he himself wanted to untie Andrew from the cross, but he could not touch him because his arm was paralyzed. After the death of Andrew, Maximilla, Aegeas' wife, buried Andrew's body with decency. Aegeas, on the other hand, was seized by a devil and dies a horrendous death in front of everyone's eyes. In the painting, Dracula obviously appears in the form of Aegeas. Next to him, a figure wearing a turban (so a Turk) is assisting in the crucifixion. The message of the painting: Aegeas-Dracula betrayed Christ, that is, Christianity, and became a follower of the pagan Turks. As seen, Pope Pius II conveyed the same message about Dracula.



Figure 1.
***The Martyrdom of St. Andrew* 1470–1480, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna**

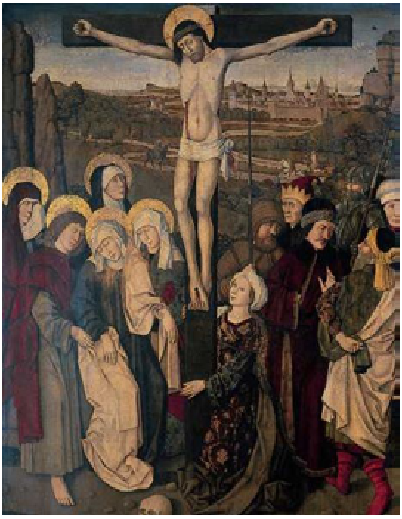


Figure 2.
***Crucifixion*, Maria am Gestade, Vienna, altarpiece, 1460–1470**

In 2002 Klein Konrad discovered that on the winged altar of the Maria am Gestade Church in Vienna, a panel depicting the crucifixion of Jesus, created between 1460 and 1470 (Figure 2) features Dracula as well [27, S. 7]. In the painting, the voivode is talking to a Jewish man on the left side of the picture. The dialogue is overseen by a soldier with a spear. According to Konrad, the painting was made in 1460–1462. The dual division of the picture is not accidental: the heads of those on the right (Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, St. John) are surrounded by a halo, while those on the left (soldiers, Jews, officials) are not. Therefore, they are the enemies of Christ, and it is no coincidence that Dracula is among them, pointing to Jesus with his left hand [36, S. 113][15]. The type of crucifixion representations to which this altarpiece belongs follows the Gospel of John. Here's the excerpt in question:

> And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in

15 On the interpretation of medieval images depicting the crucifixion, see: [12, p. 95–109].

Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written (John 19: 19–22).



Figure 3.
***Christ before Pilate* (altarpiece),**
Narodna galerija, inv. NG S 1176, Ljubljana

In the altarpiece of the Maria am Gestade church, Dracula can therefore be seen in the role of Pilate, talking to the Jewish high priests. This conjecture is confirmed by the fact that Dracula evidently appears as Pilate on an altarpiece made around this time (Figure 3). The altarpiece containing the painting was made between 1460 and 1465 and belonged to the Franciscan monastery in Vienna. It was acquired at the beginning of the twentieth century by the owner of Wöllan Castle in Lower Styria (now Velenje, Slovenia), from where in 1936 it was transferred to the National Museum of Slovenia (Ljubljana, Narodna galerija, inv. NG S 1176). The painting depicts the scene where Pilate/Dracula interrogates Jesus. Through the small window of the throne we see Pilate's wife, who warns the vicar not to condemn Jesus. According to Erwin Pokorny, the

message of the painting is that just as the pagan Pilate betrayed Jesus, so did the schismatic Dracula betray Western Christianity, and allied with the Turks [36, S. 112]. In this case, the wife warns Dracula not to conform with the Turks. The Gospel of Matthew writes this about Pilate's wife: "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. 27: 19). It is no coincidence that Pilate's wife, who would later have a name (Prokla, or Claudia Procula), was canonized by the Eastern Church. In early Christianity, Pilate was not yet a negative figure: in the fourth century he was considered a truthful judge, and the hand-washing scene was interpreted by analogy with baptism: just like Pilate immersed his hands in the water, so will the baptized be immersed in the cruciferous waters. In the East, this positive image of Pilate was preserved (the Ethiopian Christian church honours him as a saint to this day), while in the West he gradually became a negative character in the story of Jesus [10, p. 97–106]. Beheim's chronicle offers a textual analogy with the painting as well, since it is not difficult to recognise the reference to Pilate in the image of the voivode who delights in the suffering of those on the stakes, and washes his hands in blood.

One morning, early,
he hurried with his captives
to the mountain above the church
and had them impaled, each and every one,
in a circle around the mountain —
some lengthwise and some at a slant.
Listen to the misdeeds of this despicable man!
He sat down to eat in the midst [of the slaughter].
He ate his meal at the table,
filled with glee.
It was his bliss (and gave him pleasure)
to witness the dripping blood of the dying.
He had the custom
of washing his hands in blood
when his dinner table was brought to him [46, p. 322].

According to the story, as told in Matthew's Gospel, by washing his hands, Pilate expressed that he was innocent in shedding Jesus' blood (cf. Matt. 27: 24): "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

By the fifteenth century in Western Christianity Pilate became a symbol of the betrayal of Christ, acting out of cowardice and in order to keep his power. This analogy could be perfectly applied to Dracula who allied with the Turks and thus betrayed Christianity. This view emerged due to the distrust that the Catholic West felt towards the Greek Orthodox. Such sentiments were particularly strong in 1453, after the fall of Constantinople, which happened during the reign of Dracula. Many believed that the Greeks had betrayed the cause of Christianity, and surrendered to the Turks without real struggle [26, p. 30–30; 31]. Pope Pius II himself, in an unsent letter addressed to Mehmed II (1432–1481) in the second half of 1461, called on the Sultan to be baptized, and wrote that conquering the western lands would not be as easy as the conquest of Constantinople. There the Turks have succeeded only because Eastern people are less belligerent than the Westerners, and they are more prone to wavering in their religion, as opposed to the Westerners, who are unshakable in their Christian faith [20, p. 155–157].

In the much-debated, famous painting of Piero della Francesca (cca. 1420–1492), *The Flagellation of Christ* (*Flagellazione,* Figure 4), which triggered a host of increasingly far-fetched interpretations, another Greek Orthodox ruler, no less than the Byzantine emperor himself is depicted in the role of Pilate. The message of the painting is that the whipped Christ symbolizes the suffering of Christianity, which was further intensified with the fall of Constaninople. The flagellation is overseen by a figure in a Turkish turban, and Pilate, who, as mentioned above, is none other than the (traitorous) Byzantine emperor [13; 32, p. 75–77]. The present paper refrains from taking a position on the symbolism of the three figures on the right side of the painting. According to the survey by Andrea Bonavoglia, the young blonde figure in the middle wearing a crimson dress was identified with more than fifteen persons between 1744 and 2019: as an enemy of Emperor Frederick, an angel, an allegory (e. g. of virtus), Christ, a Gentile Greek, a Christian Gentile Youth, a Jewish Youth, David, Saint John, Marsilio Ficino, King Matthias, etc. [11]. Almost all interpreters agree, however, that Pilate, on the throne is to be identified with the Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos (1405–1453),

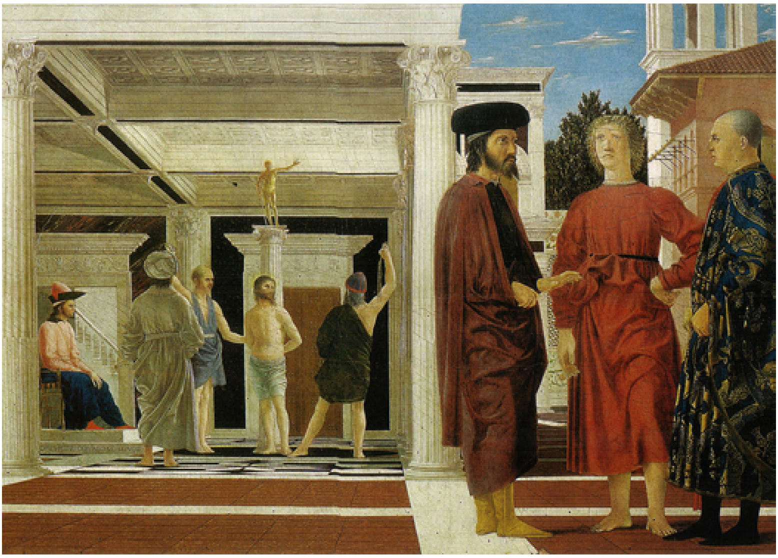


Figure 4.
Piero della Francesca, *Flagellazione*, 1459?,
Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino

that is, an expressis verbis ruler of the Byzantine Rite, just as Dracula was imagined to be in fifteenth-century Vienna, even though we know that he converted to the Catholic faith, as his father did.

Cruelty, Ambivalence, Humour

The Dracula image of the narratives and paintings described above is composed of topoi well-known among humanists of the late 15th century. The methods of torture employed by the voivode are almost without exception found in the *Legenda aurea*, a true European bestseller of the latter half of the fifteenth century. Therefore, authors/copyists of the Dracula stories did not aim to provide an account of historical reality but wanted to create a fictitious personage. The narratives are always seasoned with a degree of humour arising from the ambiguities of the stories. This is partly explained by humanist authors' peculiar attraction towards ambiguous modes of speaking, while the inevitable connection between torture or brutality, and corporeality is yet another factor. In the Middle Ages, corporeality is a consistent source of humour. The entertainment of the beggars with a feast and the punishment of the hypocritical monk testify not only to the

cruelty of the voivode, but also to his grotesque sense of justice. What follows below is the story about the hypocrisy of priests:

> Once a priest
> came to Dracula and
> delivered a sermon.
> Sins would not be forgiven
> unless one returned unjustly acquired goods
> taken from other persons
> without measure.
> Dracula walked with the priest,
> then invited him to dine.
> At the meal,
> while they were sitting at the table,
> this debauched and devilish man broke
> crumbs into his food.
> The clergyman now and then
> took morsels of Dracula's food
> with his spoon
> and began to eat them.
> Dracula then said: "Now, tell me:
> Did you not preach here that
> sins will only be forgiven
> if one leave to the rightful owner that which is coming to him?"
> The priest answered: "Indeed, that is my
> religious instruction in such matters."
> Dracula retorted: "Why, then,
> did you take crumbs from me that
> I had broken here on the table?
> This will bring you no good."
> He then took the poor priest and
> had him impaled as soon as he could [46, p. 329][16].

16 Cf.: [8, S. 204–205].

The priest's sermon — only those who return the wrongfully taken possessions will be forgiven — is but a paraphrase of the Decalogue's "*Don't steal.*" commandment. At the same time, the feast of Dracula and the priest closely follows the scenes of the Communion as well. However, while in the New Testament (Luke 22: 19–20; 1 Cor. 11: 23–25) Jesus distributes the bread among his disciples, in Dracula's eyes, the priest taking crumbs from his bread is actually stealing. We are dealing with a twisted Communion story where Dracula appears as a sort of counter-Jesus (Satan). The original story was probably written with an intent of anticlerical criticism, because the narrative is also about ecclesiastical hypocrisy. The priest preaches that the goods which were wrongfully taken must be returned, but he himself wrongfully takes the bread from Dracula's table, meaning that the Church also wrongfully acquires its material goods while proclaiming that doing so is a sin. Even if the rewritten version of the story focuses on the cruelty and the diabolical nature of the voivode (the counter-Jesus), it also preserved the anticlericalism and the humour of the original. Thus, the narrative acquired a peculiar ambivalence: Dracula is not only evil, but also just, because ultimately, he punishes a hypocritical priest.

The feeling of fear and terror and the desire to escape these feelings are simultaneously present in the depths of the Dracula stories. The seriousness of fear is disposed by laughter, and that is why laughter is an integral part of the grotesque in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance even in representations of death and cruelty [41]. All this stems from the fact that the grotesque body, as imagined in the medieval paradigm, is not affected by cruelty or suffering. "The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" [9, p. 317]. The Dracula stories are full of bodies torn into pieces, cut open, cooked and mixed with each other:

> Many came to know much torment there!
> Some were roasted, burned through;
> some were broiled; some skinned;
> and still others were hanged.
> Some were ground on a sharpening wheel;
> still others got lowered
> into latrines.

Some, nude,
got hanged by the hair;
others he directed to be suspended
on iron chains.
Those who had been struck
in their eyes, noses and mouths
and in their private places
he commanded to be hanged.
He also had stones thrown at them
until they perished.
For some people, he commanded that
augers bore out their eyes,
and nails be shoved through their ears.
This evil shedder-of-blood!
No safety or security was found there.
Some were disemboweled
and had their throats riven.
Dogs, too, were put to use.
If incited to attack humans,
they immediately bit them to death [46, p. 325–326].

Such passages are similar to representations of the body in medieval mystery plays, diableries, where ripping, eating, burning, and swallowing of the body is a frequent scene. In the *Mystère des Actes des apôtres* (1470), for example, Lucifer gives a long list to the devils containing different methods to burn heretics [17]. The mystery of Saint Quintinus lists more than a hundred verbs describing torture (burn, dismember, tear to pieces, etc.) [23] which are abundantly present in the Dracula stories, too. These dismembered, fried, cooked bodies are even devoured in the Dracula stories.

He took the children from their mothers
then gave the order to roast them.
Next, the mothers had to eat them.
Then, he cut off their breasts,

which were roasted, too,
and their husbands were forced to eat them. <...>

He had some compatriots
decapitated, taking the heads
which he used to lure crayfish.
Afterwards the scoundrel
invited friends of the deceased to dine.
Listen, there are still more indignities
and evil things
that this villainous person, tyrant,
and evil despot committed!
I will sing to you about them.
These crayfish the treacherous fellow
gave to guests to eat,
then saying: "You have tasted
and eaten the heads of your friends" [46, p. 327, 334].

In addition to the above-mentioned cannibalistic scenes, other images of feasting also appear frequently: Dracula eats breakfast among the stakes, he invites his victims to a feast: the boyars to be killed, the poor of the country, and the priest preaching about the need to return the taken goods as well. In medieval popular culture, the representation of feasting has always been associated with death and hell, because such scenes are inverted, travestied versions of the Last Supper of the New Testament: blood turns into wine, the torn flesh into bread, and suffering into joyful feasts [9, p. 296, 379]. The elements of the popular, carnevalistic worldview — even if not in an as suggestive and coherent way as in the novels of François Rabelais — are, fragmentarily, but still present in the Dracula stories. That is why there is an element of humour here and there.

However, the Dracula stories feature another manner of the representation of the body, which differs significantly from the former. And this derives from the *Legenda aurea*, which already had a huge influence on the stories. In contrast to the popular, carnivalistic, grotesque, open, ever-transforming body, the bodies of saints are always closed. The ideal manifestation of this is virginity, that is, a perfectly closed body that is not mixed with another body at all. It is no co-

incidence that saints are always virgins, too. Several female saints were able to become holy precisely because they retained their virginity (e. g. Saint Dorothy, Saint Barbara, Saint Margaret of Antioch, Saint Catherine of Alexandria, etc.). The closed virgin body is the temple of God, inhabited by the immortal soul, that is, the divine part of man. Thus, the body is the image of God, a microcosm, which is also the miniaturized image of the perfect, closed, orderly world. Virginity is the most perfect form of bodily integrity, which preserves the body not only during torture — Saint John, for example, is cooked in oil and does not burn — but it also prevents the disintegration of the body after death: in many cases the corpses of the saints remain intact, smell good, and produce miraculous healing. Virginity "draws us closer to God, makes man like angels," says one saint. "Lord, they are about to break into your church," another exclaims as they try to rape her" [37, p. 298, 304]. Opening up such a body, of course, equals sin. That is why Dracula, who impales, dismembers, cooks and bakes people, reaches the same level as the ill-reputed emperors known as the greatest persecutors of Christians (Nero, Diocletian).

At the same time, in Christianity, since Saint Paul, the body is associated with the material world, and as such with sin. The body is not only the temple of God, but also the house of passions that bind man to the goods of the material world (eating, drinking, sexuality). And the soul, who wishes to be free from them and to return to God, will be imprisoned by the body. The body is therefore the saint's greatest enemy. It is best to get rid of it as soon as possible so that the soul can return to its creator. But in the meantime, one should subject the body to affliction, and torture, because everything that is bad for the body is good for the soul. Whoever tries to escape the suffering of the flesh in this world will receive it back a hundred times in the afterlife. But whoever is tortured here physically will be rewarded in the afterlife. That is why the Saints, in a true masochistic manner, passionately yearn for physical suffering. Saint Dominic, for example, would like to have the following martyrdom for himself: "I would have asked you to put me to death not with swift, sudden blows, but slowly, cutting me to pieces, bit by bit, holding up before my eyes the pieces you had cut off, then putting my eyes out and leaving my half-dead body to welter in its own blood — or else to kill me any way you please" [51, p. 432].

Conclusions

Torture stories represented from Dracula's perspective result in a travestied, twisted, upside-down fragment of *Legenda aurea*. Only a fragment because the Dracula stories loosely follow each other; with the exception of Beheim's verse chronicle, they do not have a definite, well-structured concept, and they are not the products of the humanist elite, but of Medieval and Renaissance popular culture. That is why they degrade (profanise) and ridicule the solemnity associated with the torture and suffering of the saints. In the Dracula stories, instead of innocents and saints, it is often vagrants, beggars, hypocritical priests and thieving gypsies who suffer. Dracula, as a sort of inverted Nero or Diocletian merely gives the "saints" what they desire. The saint loves to suffer; he wants to subject his body to affliction and torment, despises the earthly existence, the material physical world, so he wants to meet his creator as soon as possible. Dracula is simply helping them in this: "If you are so eager to suffer, then I will give it to you, at the same time deliver you from the earthly life you hate so much, and send you to heaven."

The voivode's argument was referred to as gnostic above (and it counts as such from an official ecclesiastical point of view), but it also reveals the medieval carnivalesque world view, because these stories do ridicule the masochistic sufferings of the saints. A similar inverted humour appears in the story about inviting the beggars and the fallen to a feast and then burning them, as it includes fragments of a travestied version of a scapegoat and redemption story. With the execution of the beggars, all bad things have instantly ceased for other people: poverty has disappeared in the country, and no one is harassing people with their pleading complaints. Beggars, as Christ-like scapegoats, took all evil upon themselves, and by sacrificing them, the voivode saved other people from evil (poverty, suffering), just as Christ, who took upon himself the sin of mankind, became a curse, but by crucifixion he redeemed the sinful humanity. The carnivalesque, grotesque humour of the Middle Ages degrades and ridicules torture and cruelty. If one reads the Dracula stories not from a twenty-first century, but from a fifteenth-century perspective, then the figure of the voivode is, if not clearly positive, but by no means entirely negative, rather ambivalent.

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